

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMEMBASSY HONG KONG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

JEC PARIS 1017,8,9

USSAGE NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COGARD POLAD

XMT AMEMBASSY SUVA

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MO.11652 N/A

TAGGS:PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: JANUARY 21, 1974 EA PRESS SUMMARY

INDOCHINA

1. PRC OVERRUNS GVN FORCE, TAKES PARACELS. SHIPLER (NYT) FROM SAIGON QUOTES ARVN SPOKESMAN THAT RADIO CONTACT WITH SMALL SVN FORCE LOST FOLLOWING PRC ASSAULT SUPPORTED BY MIGS. GVN PRESUMES POSITIONS OVERRUN BUT REFUSES ADMIT DEFEAT. SHIPLER NOTES SAIGON DIPLOMATS MYSTIFIED BY PRC MOTIVES FOR ATTACK ON DISPUTED ISLANDS; POPULAR THEORY IS CHINA WANTS TO PROBE FOR OIL IN AREA. ARVN SPOKESMAN ADDS THA 125 MILITIAMEN ON PATTLE IS. AND 25 GVN NAVY MEN EACH ON ROBERT AND MONEY IS. WERE HIT SATURDAY BY SUPERIOR PRC FLEET, MIGS AND ABOUT UNCLASSIFIED

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750 SOLDIERS. MILITARY SOURCES SAY SVN JETS TOO SHORT-

RANGE TO OPERATE IN PARACELS. SHIPLER SAYS VN CLAIM TO ISLANDS DATES TO 1802; IN 1932 FRENCH INTEGRATED ISLANDS INTO THUA THIEN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION, AND SAIGON SAYS GARRISON AND WEATHER STATION HAVE BEEN THERE SINCE. PEKING CLAIMED ISLANDS A "FEW YEARS AGO", THEN EARLIER THIS MONTH PRC MFA DECLARED PARACELS TO BE CHINESE TERRITORY. THEN CHINESE, APPARENTLY FISHERMEN, CHASED OFF ROBERT IS. BY GVN FORCES, AND SERIES OF CLASHES SINCE HAVE MOVED THROUGH ISLANDS AND SURROUNDING

WATERS, CULMINATING IN PRC OVERRUNNING. PRC PATROL BOAT, BELIEVED TO HAVE 50-60 MAN CREW, SUNK, AND GVN BOAT WITH 100-MAN CREW HIT BY MISSILE AND PRESUMABLY ALSO SUNK. GREENWAY (WP) SAYS FIERCE FINAL FIGHT ON ISLANDS LASTED ABOUT 20 MINUTES. ARVN SPOKESMAN SAYS FURTHER GVN MILITARY ACTION STOPPED "FOR THE TIME BEING". GVN SHIPS STILL IN AREA, MAINLY TO SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS. GREENWAY NOTES THAT IN PAST USSR BACKED PRC CLAIM (WHICH DATES TO HAN DYNASTY) BUT RECENT AFP MOSCOW STORY SAYS TASS REPORT OF FIGHTING "MAKES NO REFERENCE TO OWNERSHIP OF THE ISLANDS". (NYDN AND CHITRIB CARRY AP SAIGON STORY ON CLASH).

2. GVN MFA INSTRUCTS SAIGON'S UN OBSERVER TO INFORM SC OF "URGENT SITUATION" AND TO REQUEST "APPROPRIATE MEASURES". MFA ALSO SAID TO BE PREPARING TO FILE PROTEST WITH 12 NATIONS THAT SIGNED AGREEMENT TO GUARANTEE VN SOVEREIGNTY, INCLUDING CHINA, US AND USSR (AP NYDN, CHITRIB). SVN OFFICIAL SAYS CAN DO NOTHING EXCEPT ATTACK DIPLOMATICALLY SINCE CHINA HAS GREATER RESOURCES AND MORE MODERN WEAPONS (AP, CHITRIB). REUTER FROM UN REPORTS THAT SVN FILES NOTE WITH UNSC PROTESTING CHINESE CLAIM TO PARACELS AND ASKING THAT "ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES" BE TAKEN IN LIGHT OF FIGHTING (NYT).

3. AP SAIGON QUOTES OFFICIAL SVN SOURCES THAT GVN TWICE ASKED US 7TH FLEET TO INTERVENE IN PARACEL UNCLASSIFIED

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BATTLE BUT WAS TURNED DOWN. US PLANES, HOWEVER, FLEW RECON OVER ISLANDS AT REQUEST OF GVN. SOURCES SAY US CIVILIAN, IDENTIFIED ONLY AS FORMER USMC OFFICER, MISSING ON ONE OF OVERRUN ISLANDS. GVN CONCEDES MILITARY DEFEAT, CALLS FOR EMERGENCY UNSC MEETING TO PLEAD ITS CASE.

4. US SOURCES SAY MRS. STEWART FREED FROM CUSTODY

AFTER US EMBASSY GUARANTEED SHE WILL STAY IN VN UNTIL SOLUTION REACHED IN DEATH OF STRIKER AND INJURY OF OTHERS AT US COMMISSARY NEAR SAIGON (AP, SUN; WP).

5. FIGHTING SWIRLS AROUND PP. GKR FIELD REPORTS SAY "INSURGENTS" BROKE THROUGH SECTION OF FANK SOUTHERN DEFENSE LINE, POSSIBLY SETTING UP SECOND MAJOR FRONT. FIGHTING INTENSIFIES SE OF CAPITAL WHILE FANK SMASHES ENEMY POSITIONS NE OF CITY. REBELS INFILTRATE AREA 10 MILES SW OF PP INSIDE DEFENSE LINE, LOCAL RESIDENTS

FLEE. FANK WITHDRAWS FROM TOWN 13 MILES SW OF PP UNDER HEAVY ENEMY PRESSURE. CLASHES OCCUR ALONG PREK THNOT RIVER AS REBELS MAKE SIMULTANEOUS ATTACKS ON GKR POSITIONS. FANK BATTALION FIGHTS SIX MILES SE OF PP WHERE ESTIMATED 3000 REBELS MASS TO THREATEN TAKHMAU; 400 VILLAGERS REPORTEDLY ABDUCTED, AND REFUGEES SAY REBELS INTEND TO STRIKE PP FROM SOUTH (AP, SUN).

CHINA

6. PRC FORNMINISTRY SAYS "DUE PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN METED OUT TO SVN FORCES SENT TO "INVADE" PARACELS. ADDS: "PERSONNEL OF THE OTHER SIDE WHOM WE HAVE CAPTURED . . . WILL BE REPATRIATED AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME."

7. IN JAN. 20 REPORT ON ACTION IN PARACELS, PEKING REASSERTED "INDISPUTABLE SOVEREIGNTY" OVER PARACELS SPRATLYS, MACCLESFIELD BANK AND PRATAS ISLANDS. ASSERTED PRC DETERMINATION TO DEFEND ITS "TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY" AND WARNED THAT GVN IS "BOUND TO EAT THEIR OWN BITTER FRUIT" UNLESS "ENCROACHMENT" UNCLASSIFIED

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ON PARACELS ENDS (NYDN, NYT, SUNSISAACS IN HK) WP ITEM SAYS CHINA BASES ITS ORIGINAL CLAIM TO PARACELS AND SPRATLYS BACK TO HAN DYNASTY. CHINA RENOUNCED RIGHTS IN 1881 TREATY, FRANCE ADMINISTERED ISLANDS UNTIL THEIR SEIZURE BY JAPAN IN 1939, THEN ISLANDS TURNED OVER TO CHINA IN 1951 SAN FRANCISCO TREATY. BUT SVN CLAIMED HEAD OF VIET DELEGATION AT CONFERENCE DECLARED VN RECOVERED SOVEREIGNTY OVER ISLANDS AFTER JAPAN'S SURRENDER.

8. ISAACS STRESSES THAT PRC-GVN INTEREST IN ISLANDS MIGHT HAVE BEEN REKINDLED BY POSSIBILITY OF OFFSHORE OIL RESOURCES IN AREA (ALSO, NYT).

9. QUOTING PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLES, NCNA SUNDAY

ACCUSED MOSCOW OF USING MUSIC AS MEANS OF ACHIEVING
"COMPLETE RESTORATION OF CAPITALISM" AND DENOUNCED
"BOURGEOIS" MUSIC OF BEETHOVEN, SCHUBERT AND MOZART
(AFP, WP). FIVE MEMBERS OF SOVIET EMBASSY IN PEKING
WHO WERE EXPELLED FROM CHINA SATURDAY ON CHARGES
OF SPYING HAD BEEN HELD INCOMMUNICADO FOUR DAYS,
ACCORDING SOVIET SOURCES IN PEKING. SOVIET DIPLOMATS
DISPUTE SPYING CHARGES. LONDON TIMES DISPATCH SAYS
WITH THIS INCIDENT,
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